



AN ESSAY

ON A

PECULIAR ERUPTIVE DISEASE

ARISING FROM THE EXHIBITION

OF

MERCURY.

ILLUSTRATED WITH CASES TAKEN AT

THE

WESTMORELAND LOCK HOSPITAL, DUBLIN.

By GEORGE ALLEY.

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1804.

TO
JAMES HENTHORN,

AND

FRANCIS M'EVOY, Esqrs.

*Senior Surgeons to the Westmeireland Lock Hospital,
Dublin, &c. &c.*

GENTLEMEN,

WHILE I confess the proud satisfaction I feel in being permitted to inscribe to you the following Essay, I must also acknowledge the obligations I owe to your kindness, in granting me those ample opportunities, that your Hospital alone could have afforded, for observing the disease of which I treat.

It is, therefore, with peculiar justice and pleasure that I dedicate to you the subsequent pages; convinced that, in doing so, I pay, however humble, an honest tribute to useful and distinguished Talent.

I remain, Gentlemen,

Your much obliged

Friend and Servant,

GEORGE ALLEY.

DUBLIN,

December 2, 1803,

ERRATA.

Page 17 l. 9 for scurvy read scurfy

40 l. 17 — other — of the

48 l. 5 — of — on

57 l. 12 — Eyes — left eye

65 l. 7 — Tarsi — the Tarsi

71 l. 14 — Miliarca — Miliaria

ADVERTISEMENT.

THE publication of this Essay has been delayed now nearly four months by the difficulty of procuring adequate Engravings of the disease. Even now I am obliged to present it to the Public in a very imperfect state: for, as the Plates, so often referred to, appeared to me to confuse more than assist the verbal description, I have therefore determined to suppress them altogether; rather chosing to be censured on the score of imperfection than on that of misrepresentation.

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INTRODUCTION.

THE DISEASE, which I attempt to elucidate in the following pages, is one of those melancholy consequences, which so frequently succeed the exhibition of Mercury; and strongly enforces the awful truth, that, although the efficacy of that medicine is established by the experience of nearly two centuries, it is yet found, in many instances, to produce unexpected and calamitous effects: utterly disappointing the hopes, with which it is prescribed, and even aggravating the miseries it was intended to relieve.

B

It

It will not, perhaps, be deemed too great an anticipation, to offer, in this place, a few general observations on the nature, and history of this disease, which I now venture to call “Mercurial;” especially, as they will serve to explain the reasons, which have induced me to give it that appellation *

This disorder has been, till lately, I believe, considered as arising from a more malignant species of the venereal infection; and has been consequently subjected to the exhibition of Mercury, in a degree proportioned to the supposed necessity of the case. That it is no way, however, connected with Syphilis, and
that

* Some who have seen the disease have bestowed on it the several titles of “*Lepra Mercurialis*, *Erythema Mercuriale*, and *Mercurial Herpes*.” It will be seen, I trust, hereafter, that none of these is, by any means, an applicable term; and that the appellation “*Mercurial Disease*,” is a more appropriate title.

that it is produced solely by the administration of Mercurial Preparations, the following facts will, I trust, fully demonstrate.

1st. The disease has appeared in some instances where the system was under the influence of Mercury, but where there was not the slightest suspicion entertained of the existence of the venereal poison.

2ndly. The eruption, and the desquamation of the cuticle, with which it is attended, are of a peculiar nature; and not only differ essentially from those, which accompany every other disorder, but have never been known to appear, except where the system has been under the immediate influence of Mercury.

And 3rdly. Mercury not only proves insufficient, in every case, to the removal of the disease, but uniformly tends

to the aggravation of the symptoms, when its exhibition is persisted in.

Such are the phænomena, which have induced me to consider this a disease arising solely from the use of mercury; and by which perhaps, the eminent characters, to whom this work is dedicated, were at first led to the discovery of its nature*. To these gentlemen, it first became known in the year 1789; and on whatever grounds they might have formed their opinion, the world is much indebted to their sagacity and observation: for, from that discovery has resulted a mode of treatment very different, indeed, from what had been before adopted

* Many will perhaps lay claim to the discovery of the nature of this disease. I shall not enter, however, into any controversy on the matter. I merely state my own belief, which is founded on the authority of some of the most respectable in the profession, who can testify that these gentlemen first brought the disease into public notice.

adopted. And the consequences have abundantly evinced the wisdom of the change; as the disease, which, not long since, in general terminated fatally, at present very rarely proves mortal.

It would be unnecessary after this statement, to offer any apology for the work, which I now presume to lay before the public, except what the execution of it may, indeed, demand. I am aware, that publications, which are singular for their novelty, are seldom so for their truth; yet, as in the science of medicine, there is an extensive range for observation, and much still remains to be acquired, novelty and truth may not always be separated.

In support, however, of the authenticity of the remarks contained in the following pages, it is necessary to observe,

serve, that they are drawn chiefly from cases, which occurred in the Westmoreland Lock Hospital, Dublin, within the last four years; and which I have attended to with minute and unremitting investigation. For some hints, however, and these not the least particular, I am indebted to the observation, and; let me add, to the friendship of others; and among these, I should consider myself deficient in gratitude, did I not mention particularly, Mr. Peile*, and the Surgeons of the Institution† above alluded to; men, whose opinions I respect as much, as I esteem their virtues.

* Assistant Inspector General of the Forces in Ireland, and Surgeon to the House of Industry.

† Lock Hospital, Dublin——Senior Surgeons, Messrs. Henthorn, and M'Evoy.—Assistants, Messrs. Lestrangle, Dease, and Crampton.

S E C T. I.

THE SYMPTOMS AND GENERAL APPEARANCES &c.

THE MERCURIAL DISEASE may be divided into two species, the mild and malignant: the first, being accompanied only with slight Pyrexia, whilst the latter is attended with very considerable Fever. The malignant species might itself be divided; but many divisions contribute more to embarrass, than to assist description; and it will, perhaps, be sufficient, to notice, distinctly, the symptoms and terminations of that species, in favourable and unfavourable cases.

C

The

The mild or benignant kind, has little to characterize it but an eruption, which, as it is common to both species of the disease, will not here require any particular consideration.

But in the malignant species as I have intimated, we have to combat with a fever, always of a serious, and sometimes of an alarming nature; and which, of course, demands a minute and accurate description.

FIRST DAY.

This fever which is preceded by languor, restlessness, and rigors, or, rather, what is termed horripilatio, and sometimes by a degree of faintness, and pains of the limbs, is marked, on the first day, with nausea, headache, oppression about the præcordia, difficulty of breathing,
and

and a dry distressing cough. The pulse is full, and is, generally, about 100 in the minute. The skin is hot, and, for the most part, so obstinately dry, that even vomiting, induced by nauseating medicines, (for spontaneous vomiting very rarely occurs,) seldom causes any determination to the surface. The tongue is white, and usually moist; though there is a considerable degree of thirst. Costiveness prevails, and the belly is frequently swelled and tense. The urine, however, is natural in quantity and colour. Watchfulness and anxiety are also experienced in a considerable degree; and the intervals of sleep, by whatever means procured, are but short and disturbed.

An itchiness and prickling heat of the skin precede the appearance of the eruption, which is commonly the first symptom, and uniformly dis-

covers itself on the first day of the disease. In males it usually commences about the scrotum, and the inside of the thighs: and sometimes on the neck, breast, and superiour extremities; the back, face, and abdomen are, in general, the parts last affected. It is not long, however, confined to any particular part, but soon spreads, in such a manner, over the entire surface of the body, that, at length, the spaces between the spots can scarcely be distinguished. It is evidently rough to the touch, of a reddish hue, which disappears upon pressure, and is very similar to that, which characterizes Rubeola, excepting that the spots are larger, and of a less florid colour*. *Vide plate I.*

SECOND

* For further particulars on the nature of the Eruption, and of the desquamation in the benignant species. *Vide Miscellaneous Remarks.*

S E C O N D D A Y .

Excepting the Nausea and head-ache*, the symptoms, on the second day, are generally aggravated. The difficulty of breathing, and the præcordial oppression become more distressing; and the cough is more severe. The pulse increases in frequency, being generally found from 110 to 120 in the minute; and loses nothing of the first day's fullness. The skin remains hot, and commonly without moisture. The tongue presents a white and foul appearance, yet is not dry: but the thirst is so considerable

* Though nausea may remain after the first day, it is but slight; and however the eyes may be suffused, the head-ache, for the most part abates. A considerable pain of the head is, indeed, often excited by the exertions in coughing; but it soon subsides, when that cause ceases to operate,

siderable, that the patient calls eagerly for acidulated liquors. Costiveness still prevails, yet there is little alteration in the state of the urine.

The eruption becomes more dusky and more generally diffused; and the surface is considerably elevated and rough: but the spots are without any degree of scurfiness at their edges.

T H I R D D A Y.

On the third day the præcordial oppression, and difficulty of breathing continue to encrease. The skin is still intensely hot and dry: the pulse remains as full and frequent as before: the tongue, though moist, is very foul; and the urine, which now increases in quantity, is without sediment and of a high colour,

The

The eruption, at the same time, becomes more diffused, and less dusky; and resembles much that of Scarlatina, but its colour is not quite so florid. *Vide Plate II.*

Towards the close of this day, or early on the fourth, the cuticle begins to desquamate from the surface of the body; and the separation is usually preceded by a foreness of the fauces, throat, or tongue, which, as it generally abates in a day or two, would seem to be merely a consequence of the desquamation.

F O U R T H D A Y .

On the fourth day, in general, the cuticle begins to separate from the entire surface of the body; always scaling first from that part, on which the eruption

tion first appeared: and proceeding regularly, so that it desquamates last from the place, which is last affected by the eruption. This desquamation is frequently attended with a profuse serous discharge, which stains the linen, and which, especially in those parts, where the perspiration is most copious in the state of health, is peculiarly fetid. It might naturally be supposed, that, when the desquamation commences, the fever would subside. But this by no means happens, except in the milder cases of this species, where little, or no discharge attends the desquamation. The cuticle frequently peels off in large pieces, from the hands, feet, thighs, or any part, where it is thick, and not subject to attrition: and I have seen that of the hand, especially, separate so completely, as to resemble a glove. Should perspiration, however, occur frequently on the face, as may happen
from

from the exertions in coughing, the cuticle separates in a manner more scurfy than scaly*.

The desquamation, however, does not always proceed in the manner, that has been just now described: for, frequently, the cuticle is so cracked, that it has been aptly compared to the scored skin of roasted pork! when this is the case, the discharge is not merely ferous, but is of an ichorous and peculiarly

* Though this is the ordinary course of the disease, yet cases sometimes occur, which by no means observe such regularity of symptoms: and I have seen one, in which the desquamation did not commence for ten days after the appearance of the eruption. I may, however, observe generally, that those cases of the malignant species are the most favourable, in which the desquamation begins soonest: the fever in such being milder, and of shorter continuance.

cularly fetid nature*. The body is also particularly sore; and the cuticle, being tinged with the colour of the matter, presents a most disgusting appearance†. This, however, does not happen till the disease is pretty far advanced, and generally, not until the fever, rendered, perhaps, more virulent by the absorption of this matter, begins to assume the putrid type.

Such are the symptoms with which the fourth day is usually terminated. After that period, in favourable cases, when the cuticle separates fairly, either without

* The fetor which proceeds from those affected with this variety of the disease, resembles at once, that which arises from the breath of a person salivated by mercury, and that which issues from gangrenous sloughings. Indeed it is almost impossible to give an adequate idea of it, for it is of such a kind, that those only, who have experienced it, can conceive the disgusting peculiarity of its nature.

without any, or, with a true serous discharge, the fever gradually declines with the desquamation; and terminates, in general, on or before the 11th day, although the desquamation may not be completed over the entire body for some weeks. The præcordial uneasiness, and the cough and difficulty of breathing abate: and though a severe griping may be experienced during the whole course of the disease, with a considerable degree of thirst, yet the pulse, in general, gradually regains its natural strength and frequency. The surface also becomes cooler; the tongue cleanses; and the urine, which is evacuated in great quantity, deposits a copious and slimy sediment.

But in those cases, on the contrary, in which, while the desquamation proceeds with difficulty, the cuticle appears to be scored or cracked, as before de-

scribed, and the discharge is ichorous and fetid, the disease is attended with very unpromising symptoms. The cough becomes very severe, and is accompanied with great forenefs of the chest; the matter expectorated is sometimes, highly tinged with blood, which is so coagulated as to threaten suffocation. The pulse is frequent and irregular, the surface of the body continues intensely hot and sore, the thirst becomes unquenchable, the tongue grows parched and black in the centre; and the urine is high coloured, small in quantity, and without sediment.

Wretched indeed is the situation of the patient in this stage of the disease. Without the enjoyment of one moment's repose; afflicted in body with the most excruciating anguish, and depressed in mind to the last misery of despair, he soon falls beneath this complication of wretchedness.

wretchedness. Diarrhœa, and low delirium * speedily supervene--the pulse sinks--the body mortifies †---and a state of insensibility at length announces the termination of a complaint, that exhibits, at once, a distressing proof of the inefficacy of medicine, and the insufficiency of human skill.

* I never saw the *Delirium ferox* in this disease; nor does the head, except the latter stage, seem to be at all engaged.

† The mortification, which takes place towards the close of this disease, is of a singular nature; for it merely spreads on the surface, and does not seem to extend farther than the cuticle. It is also necessary to remark, that such termination is generally the consequence of neglect or improper treatment.

S E C T. II.

DIAGNOSIS.

AS this disease resembles, in it's appearances, many others, I shall endeavour to point out it's characteristic distinctions; commencing the contrast with the class of Exanthemata, to which it seems to bear the closest affinity.

The Mercurial disease differs from most of the Exanthemata, as it is attended by a desquamation, which extends over the entire surface of the body; and which is not preceded by any perceptible vesication,

tion, or by pustulation: and it differs from all the Exanthemata, as the eruption is synchronous with the fever; and the fever is usually unattended by, and terminated without sweating.

Besides these general distinctions, it exhibits particular differences.

I. It may be distinguished from Rubella; for, the eruption of the former, generally, appears first on the inside of the thighs, breast, neck and superiour extremities; whereas that of the latter first affects the face. The eruption of Rubella is described as being of a more vivid red, on the first day, and becoming more dusky on the third: but in the Mercurial disease, it is observed, that the spots are darker at first; and, though they diffuse themselves, as in Rubella, on the third day, yet they are then of a lighter colour---In the Measles there is a defluxion

ion from the eyes and nose; the eyes are also sore, and intollerant of light--- In the Mercurial disease, on the contrary, there is, in general, no soreness of the eyes, till the desquamation commences; and the soreness is then confined to the Tarfi, and unattended by any discharge, or impatience of light---Lastly, the desquamation, in the Measles, is dry and of the mealy kind---but in the Mercurial disease, the cuticle, generally strips off in larger pieces; and the separation is, followed frequently by a serous, and sometimes by a purulent and fetid discharge.

II. From Scarlatina, likewise, this complaint considerably varies. In Scarlatina the eruption is of a bright scarlet hue, but, in the Mercurial disease, it is of a dusky red colour---In the former, the skin is smooth, and almost uniformly of a reddish tint: but in the latter, the
surface

surface is elevated and rough; and during the first and second days, especially, the spaces between the spots can easily be distinguished---soreness of the throat precedes the eruption in Scarlatina: whereas in the Mercurial disease, the throat does not become tender 'till the desquamation begins---In Scarlatina the desquamation is of a scurvy nature, the cuticle falling off like bran from the surface: In the Mercurial disease, on the contrary, the cuticle, generally, separates in scales---Further, in Scarlatina, after the eruption has appeared, exposure to cool air has been found injurious: but in the Mercurial disease, such exposure has not been attended with any inconvenience, until the whole of the cuticle has desquamated*.

III. From

* I here speak of the Scarlatina only as it occurs in Great Britain and Ireland; and without noticing the descriptions, given by various Authors, of those
different

III. From Erysipelas also the Mercurial disease very materially differs: for, the eruption of the latter is darker than that of the former, and is not only attended with elevation of surface, without perceptible vesication; but is a general affection, unaccompanied with local pain, till desquamation occurs.

IV. Between

different epidemic disorders, which they have witnessed; and have, for the most part referred to this disease. Lorry, in his *Hist. de la Societ. roy. de Med.* has observed a peculiar species of eruptive fever, to which he gives the name of Scarlatina, that appeared in the year 1777; Storck, De Haen, Rosen, Kirchvogel, Navier, and many others, of equal note, have mentioned different species of Scarlet Fever, many of the symptoms of which resemble those of the malignant species of the Mercurial disease. But these epidemical eruptive fevers are not at all established under any particular class, being some referable to the Measles, some to Scarlatina, and some to an anomalous species of fever, or a mixture of the Scarlet and Miliary diseases.

IV. Between the Miliary and the Mercurial diseases we find so little similarity, that it is unnecessary to contrast them.

So far the Mercurial disease may be said to differ from the class of Exanthemata. I shall now therefore endeavour to mark its distinctions from those few other eruptive diseases, by which it is, in any degree, resembled.

The irritation, which Mercurial frictions very frequently excite on the skin, is somewhat similar, on its first appearance, to the eruption of the Mercurial disease. It differs however in the following particulars—first, it is a local affection—secondly, it is, for the most part attended with small, well filled pustules—and thirdly it is a mere cutaneous affection, unaccompanied with fever.

There is but one species of the Venereal Eruption, which can be mistaken for the disease in question. In the former, however, the spots appear in the form of distinct Maculæ, affecting somewhat of a circular figure, and seldom running into each other; whilst in the latter the eruption extends irregularly in large dusky suffusions, and leaves but few interstices between the spots*.

Notwithstanding those differences, the eruptions are liable to be confounded by
inaccurate

* It was intended, in order still more satisfactorily to distinguish the two diseases, to subjoin a Plate representing the appearance of that species of the Venereal eruption above alluded to. Since that became impracticable, the accurate examination of the history of the case is still more strongly recommended; for, by a careful enquiry into previous circumstances, the possibility of mistake may entirely be obviated.

inaccurate observers. It is necessary therefore, to mention further, that a recurrence to the history of the disease will contribute to the total removal of doubt; the sudden appearance of the Mercurial eruption, whilst the system is under the full influence of Mercury, and the great rapidity of its progress, tending, still more strongly, to characterize its nature.

S E C T. III.

METHOD OF TREATMENT.

HAVING enumerated the disorders, with which the Mercurial disease might be confounded; and exhibited a Diagnosis, fully adequate, I should hope, to obviate the danger of mistake; I shall proceed to state the method of treatment, which has been adopted with the most beneficial effects.

Immediately on the appearance of the eruption, and previous to the administration of any medicine, all those
causes

causes, which contributed to produce, and might tend to aggravate the disease, should, if possible, be removed. It is, therefore, advisable, in the first instance, to desist entirely from the exhibition of Mercury, to remove the patient without delay from the Mercurial atmosphere, to change the cloaths, and cleanse the skin by tepid baths. These precautionary measures are, in every instance, advantageous and essential; and, in those cases, in which they do not serve to check the progress, they rarely fail to mitigate the violence of the disease.

Sometimes, however, though every precaution should have been taken, the fever runs so high, as to demand our most serious attention. In such cases the first indications, generally speaking, are, to remove costiveness, and to allay heat.

To

To remove costiveness, any mild purgative will be sufficient; for, in this disease, the bowels are easily affected by opening medicines. Recourse may be, therefore, had to any of the neutral salts: to the *Oleum Ricini*; or to the *Antimon: Tartar:* which has fully answered that purpose, when given in small doses so as to nauseate.

To allay heat, the tepid bath has been found most effectual: and I have seldom seen an instance in which it did not immediately afford very considerable relief. Nothing tends more to soften the cough, and promote expectoration, than warm bathing: but care should be taken, to have the body well dried after the immersion; for, otherwise, it will prove rather injurious, than useful. When it is inconvenient to make use of general immersion, as frequently as may be necessary,

cessary,

cessary, semicupium, or pediluvium may be employed with advantage.

The benefits resulting from the Antimonial preparations are at once great and obvious; and, though they seldom produce their usual sudorific effects in this disease, they rarely fail to operate in a very effectual manner; in consequence, perhaps, of that power, which has been lately attributed to them, of diminishing the action of Mercury in the system. But, however, this may be, they certainly possess advantages which are very fully ascertained; for they soften the pulse, they keep the bowels moderately open, and they diminish the external heat: though, I have not observed, that they produce any extraordinary change in the urine.

The preparations of Antimony, used in the cure of this disease, are, the Antimon: tartar: given either in full vomiting or small nauseating doses. The latter mode of exhibiting this preparation seems to me the better, as vomiting is seldom indicated in this complaint: the nausea and head-ache, which usher in the fever, rarely continuing after the first day. The Pulvis Antimon: also proves of considerable service; and may be given in doses proportioned to the constitution of the patient, and the urgency of the case. But the Vinum Antim:* appears to be the best preparation,

as

* I here annex the Formula of the Mist: Diaph: of the Lock Hospital, Dublin, as we shall have frequent references to it in the subsequent part of this Essay. It will be found, that Antimony and Opium contribute very considerably to its composition.

as it may be combined more elegantly with Opium and other medicines, singularly useful in this complaint.

The use of Opium, in this disease, is well ascertained, though many have rejected that medicine in the incipient stage of fevers. Perhaps, however, the efficacy of Opium may here, in some degree, depend on its conjunction with Antimony; at least, it has appeared to me chiefly useful, at that period of the fever, in which Antimony is given with the best effects. As to the effects of Opium I have to observe, that it invariably tends to produce rest, to diminish anxiety and præcordial uneasiness; and, by promot-

F 2

ing

Rj. Aquæ menthæ Vulgaris simpl.

Aquæ ammoniæ acetatæ

cujusque uncias tres

Vini Antimonii drachs. tres

Tincturæ Opii drachm. cum semisse,

Misce.

ing expectoration, to soften the cough, and relieve the difficulty of breathing.

Opium may be given 1st simply--- either in the tincture, or in the pill made from the watry extract: 2dly. combined ---with Antimony, as already mentioned; with Hippo as the pulv. Doveri; or with expectorants, as hereafter to be noticed: and 3rdly. where Diarrhœa supervene in the latter stages, in the form of Enema*.

I cannot speak too highly of the use of Acids in this complaint: and I have observed, that the Nitrous, Sulphuric and Citric acids diluted with water, as also cider, small-beer, and two-milk whey, prove

Rj. Infusi feminum lini uncias novem
Tincturæ Opii guttas quadriginta,
vel.

Opii puri grana duo,

Fiat Enema.

prove equally grateful and useful. In whatever shape, indeed, they are administered, acids produce such beneficial effects, that they should never be omitted, except some contraindication forbid their use. This, however, seldom happens; for though griping of the bowels may sometimes occur, it is easily removed by some simple purgative; and though, when the desquamation begins, the mouth and throat are tender, yet the forenefs remains, in general, but a day or two, and we may recur to the use of acids with safety and advantage.

The Citric acid is best given with an alkaline solution, and should be administered in the state of effervescence. The Carbonic acid gas, extricated by the admixture of the acid and alkali, proves, I am inclined to think, not a little useful by the great antiseptic power it possesses; especially, as the system, in this disease,

disease, is so apt to run into debility, and putrescency. That species of Cider, which is most highly impregnated with this gas, should, therefore, be preferred: and, in fact any fermenting liquors, that may be ordered, should be of a lively, sparkling nature; for, otherwise, they will not only be useless, but contribute to nauseate and burthen the stomach.

As to the propriety of administering wine or bark, at the commencement, or during the hot stage of the fever, which accompanies the Mercurial disease, it will be necessary to make a few remarks.

Before the nature of this disease was known it was considered as a more virulent species of Syphilis. In proportion, therefore, as the disorder advanced, Mercury, in some form or another, was exhibited in greater quantity. The fever, consequently

consequently, was soon found to be increased to an alarming degree by the action of Mercury, thus heaped on an already overloaded system; and, lest the patient should sink too rapidly under the oppression of this fever, recourse was had to Tonics and Stimulants. Among these Bark and Wine were resorted to without any regard to symptoms or appearances. It is almost unnecessary to add, that the disease was, in every instance, dreadfully aggravated, and that very few recovered.

In the hot stage of the fever, Bark seems to have the particular effect of increasing the difficulty of breathing and the præcordial oppression to an alarming degree; and so manifest is this tendency, that the patients themselves refuse to take it after the first dose. To wine, also, they frequently evince the utmost aversion, which is an ample contraindication of its use. On the whole, therefore

fore, the administration of these stimulants in the hot or incipient stage of the fever, can be attended with no service, and has often proved of the greatest detriment.

I have already intimated, that, when the cough becomes distressing, Opium, combined with Antimony, and the tepid bath, may be employed with considerable advantage. Blistering however, where the cuticle will admit, should, at the same time, be especially resorted to: and the discharge should be encouraged by using dressings of the Savin Ointment*.

If

* The following is the Formula of the Mixture Expectorans of the Lock Hospital, Dublin.

Rj. Gummi ammoniaci scrupulos duos
 Aquæ Pulegii librâ
 Oxymel. Scillitici uncias duas
 Misce.

To this formula Opium may be added with considerable effect.

If the fever should not abate when the desquamation takes place, it will be necessary to continue those medicines, which are found serviceable before its occurrence, without regard to the profuse serous discharge that so frequently attends the separation of the cuticle. In order to promote the desquamation, the warm bath should be frequently employed: and should any excoriation happen on any part of the body, a powder composed of equal parts of starch and lapis caliminaris should be pretty thickly applied; for besides that such an application conduces to cleanliness, it contributes to ease and the generation of a new surface. It is necessary further to mention, that, should the head be excoriated behind the ears, or elsewhere, the hair should be shaved from those parts, and frequent ablution performed, as the matter discharged is foul and acrimonious.

G

I have

I have often seen Cerusse used externally, both with starch, as a powder, and in the form of ointment. But I consider Cerusse to be a dangerous remedy; for, a considerable portion of it cannot fail of being absorbed, where so great an extent of surface is exposed: and every one is aware of the dangerous consequences which very frequently attend the absorption of any preparation of lead.

As an ointment to be used in the form of dressing, I know none preferable to the Unguentum Sambuci; especially, when the excoriation extends to the eyelids, where the powder would be an improper application. And as the Tarsi are, in general, the only parts affected in this disease, a simple, mild ointment appears to be the best remedy.

As the disease, towards its close, is apt to assume the putrid type, it is necessary

fary carefully to obviate the danger of a tendency to debility. Under these circumstances, therefore, wine may be tried; and, in fact, it generally proves, at this period, a powerful remedy; and bark also, tho' contraindicated in the hot stage, may be administered, and if found to be serviceable, of course persisted in. The cold infusion seems to be the best preparation, to which the tincture of Huxam, and the Sulphuric Acid may be added with much elegance and advantage.

S E C T. IV.

CASES AND MISCELLANEOUS REMARKS.

TH E following Cases, which I have selected from a considerable number, will serve to authenticate what I have already advanced on this most interesting disease, as also to explain some other peculiarities of its nature.

C A S E I.

MICHAEL MURPHY, aged 26, and of rather a weak habit, was admitted the 27th of October 1802, affected with recent chancre on the Glans Penis. He was ordered to rub a drachm of the
Camphorated

Camphorated Mercurial Ointment* on the inside of his thighs every night, commencing on the day of his admission. On the first of November his mouth became somewhat sore, and the eruption, as described in Page 4th appeared, at the same time, on the scrotum and inside of his thighs, which was preceded by a prickling heat and itching of the skin, and accompanied with slight Pyrexia.

A saline purge was immediately prescribed, which, however, he neglected to take; and, although the exhibition of mercury was strictly prohibited, he privately procured two drachms more of the ointment, both of which he used that night. Next day the eruption was very copious, and diffused on the breast
and

* Rj. Hydrargiri unciam,
Axungię porcine uncias duas,
Camphorę drachmas duas
probe simul tere.

and upper parts of the arms and thighs; and, towards evening, extended over the entire surface of the body. The feverish symptoms also were considerably aggravated with nausea, foul tongue, great thirst, and a peculiarly hot and dry skin, he also complained of restlessness, oppression about the Præcordia, difficulty of breathing and a hard cough. His pulse was full, and upwards of 100 in a minute. His urine, however, was natural in colour and quantity.

By frequent warm bathing and keeping his bowels open by saline purges, and by the use of the Diaph: mixture of the Hospital, with an anodyne draught at night, the fever, towards the close of the fourth day, was considerably abated; at which time also, the desquamation of the cuticle, which was preceded

ceded by great forenefs of the throat, began to take place: commencing on the fcrotum and infide of the thighs.

On the 10th November, the cough and difficulty of breathing again became diftreffing. A blister was applied between the fhoulders, (the defquamation being of the dry kind there,) and he was ordered the Mift: Expect., which gave him much relief.

On the 20th the cuticle had feparated from every part of the body, excepting the elbows, palms of the hands and lower parts of the legs. During the fever his venereal complaints had difappeared; but a fmall bubo, towards its clofe, was difcovered in each groin. It was not confidered advifable to recur to mercury, as he feemed much debilitated by

by the fever. He was therefore dismissed, and did not again apply for assistance at the Hospital.

C A S E II.

SARAH SERGINT, aged 28, and of a habit weakened by the excesses, to which as a woman of the town she was exposed, was admitted the 6th Sept. 1802, affected with Syphilitic Blotches, which extended almost over every part of her body. She was ordered a course of mercurial frictions, which were continued 'till the 20th October, (by which time she had used 4 ozs. and 6 drms.) when, the blotches having degenerated into foul spreading ulcers, which mercury seemed to encrease, she was put on the use of other Nitrous Acid* and the frictions were forborne.

On

* In the following form the Nitrous Acid has been administered in the Wd. Lock Hospital, with considerable

On the 6th November, she began to take one of the following Pills night and morning:

Rj. Calomelanos grana duodecim
 Opii Extracti aquosi grana sex
 Mucilaginis Gummi Arabici q. s.
 ut fiat massa

in pillulas sex dividenda.

On the 16th it was discovered that the cuticle was separating from her legs, where, for one or two days before, she felt a prickling heat and troublesome itching of the skin, but did not notice any eruption. For some days previous to the 16th, she also complained of nausea, head-ache and hot skin, which, from

H a hope

considerable advantage, as auxiliary or supplementary to Mercury, in many syphilitic affections, and particularly in cases similar to that recited above.

Rj. Acidi nitrosi diluti drachmas duas
 Aquæ fontis libras duas
 Syrupi simplicis q. s.
 fiat haustus per horas 24 bibendus.

a hope of their disappearing, she concealed, and therefore continued to take the Pills, 'till that day.

The eruption then first became evident on the breast, upper parts of the arms, and somewhat on the face. It soon, however, extended over the entire of the body, excepting the legs, where the desquamation was advancing very rapidly, and was followed by a profuse ferous and fetid discharge. On this day also the fever was alarmingly encreased. Though there was but little head-ache, the eyes were much suffused, and the tongue, tho' moist, was yet extremely foul. She complained also of great nausea; and the rigors and tremors of the limbs were excessive. There also prevailed great anxiety, præcordial oppression, cough and difficulty of breathing. The pulse was full, and upwards of 100 in the minute; the skin hot, the belly swelled

swelled and tense, and the urine high coloured and small in quantity.

She was ordered frequent purges of the Ol: Ric: and Laxative Clysters, the Mist: Diaph: cum Opio, and warm bathing, which, however, but little diminished the fever 'till the 19th, when the urine began to deposit a copious, slimy sediment, and to be evacuated in considerable quantity, Though, during the entire progress of the disease, she expressed an anxious desire for acids, her mouth and throat were too sore to admit their being swallowed, except in a very diluted state, 'till the 20th; she then got cider, and as much of the Vitriolic Elixer as she wished to take; and those acids appeared considerably to abate the fever.

On the 22nd, the desquamation began to take place over the entire body; and

was followed, as on the legs, by a ferous discharge, which was so profuse as to debilitate her extremely. She was ordered wine, eight ounces, and bark; but the latter excited so much uneasiness about the Præcordia, that it was discontinued.

On the 24th the Tarsi became extremely sore, in consequence of the desquamation; and continued tender for a considerable time afterwards. And on the 26th, the desquamation had proceeded over the entire body; and the fever was completely abated*.

During the whole of the disease, the greatest anxiety and depression of spirits were observable,

In

* The Veal blotches separated with the desquamation, leaving a great redness underneath, but without any lesion of surface; and the ulcers had healed during the fever.

In about three weeks after the disease had entirely disappeared, she began to take the Pill: Hyd: two at night and one in the morning; which, as they induced nausea and considerable heat and itching of the skin, were forborne; and she was dismissed the Hospital, with the injunction to return, in case she found any re-appearance of eruption.

C A S E III.

ROGER KEARNEY, aged 35, was admitted on the 8th December, 1802, affected with the Eruption, which covered every part of his body excepting the scrotum, inside of the thighs, arm-pits, under the chin, and behind the ears, where desquamation had already commenced; and was accompanied with a dirty and ichorous discharge. His mouth and lips were much ulcerated, and he had great Ptyalism. The thirst was
extreme

extreme, the surface intensely hot, and, where desquamation had taken place, distressingly sore. Pulse 105, full and strong, great difficulty of breathing and fixed pain in the chest, with a severe cough, belly costive, urine high coloured, small in quantity, and without sediment.

His general health was good before he contracted a Venereal complaint, (chancre on the glans Penis) for which he took 60 of the Pill: Hyd: as an extern of the Lock Hospital. About a week before his admission he first perceived the eruption on the scrotum and inside of the thighs, which was preceded by great heat and itching, and accompanied with nausea, head-ache, severe rigors, cough and difficulty of breathing. He continued to take the pills; and the disease rapidly encreased till it obtained the height before described.

From

From the 10th to the 21st, the pectoral symptoms and the desquamation, which was attended with a profuse purulent discharge, continued to encrease. He then daily declined, and seemed exhausted by a constant hectic.

The principal remedies that were employed were the warm bath, pectoral medicines and diaphoretics. The excoriated surface was dressed with the Saturnine Ointment. On the 21st he was ordered a decoction of Bark, which, however, was omitted in a day or two, as it remarkably encreased the pectoral symptoms. On the 23rd the discharge being very profuse, the surface of his body was ordered to be sprinkled with some of the following powder:

Rj. Pulv. amyl. trit. lbj.

Cerussæ lbs

M.

From

From this day he sunk rapidly, and on the 27th he died.

C A S E IV.

ANN WARD, aged 20, and of a weak habit, admitted Nov. 14th, 1802, with chancre of the Vagina, used 5 drs. of the Ungm: Hyd: cum Camph:, when the eruption (on the 21st) appeared slightly on the thighs, neck and on the backs of the arms and legs. She had but little fever, except head-ache, hot skin, thirst and foul tongue. Pulse 104 and rather weak. As her mouth was very sore, and she had copious salivation, we could not at first discover, whether the thirst and foul tongue were symptomatic of the fever, or of the ptyalism. They seemed, however, the consequences of the latter, as they remained after the pyrexial symptoms had disappeared. Watchfulness and anxiety, or depression

depression of spirits seemed the most distressing symptoms.

The exhibition of mercury was forborne; and she got a saline purge.

On the 24th the urine, which was high coloured, began to deposit a copious slimy sediment; and desquamation, of a scurfy nature, commenced on her thighs; and was preceded by soreness of the throat.

On the 26th, the pulse was 90, and rather fuller. The thirst and foul tongue, however, still continued, and the throat remained sore. The other feverish symptoms were abated. The desquamation did not proceed over the entire of the body; the eruption on her arms, and, indeed, on every part, except her thighs, dying away without leaving

I

almost

almost any perceptible separation of the cuticle.

In about a fortnight, mercury was again recurred to, in the form of frictions; and she used four ounces, without its shewing any tendency to reproduce the eruption.

C A S E V.

MICHAEL BOYLE, aged 26, was admitted on the 11th of June, 1803, affected with the Mercurial Eruption, which covered entirely the superiour and inferiour extremities: leaving scarcely any interstices between the spots. But little appeared on the breast, belly or back; and none upon the scrotum or penis. His eyes and mouth were extremely sore; and from both issued a considerable discharge of purulent matter. He had excessive ptyalism, and a
strong

strong mercurial fetor. His throat was sore, but not ulcerated; his voice was hoarse, but he had neither cough nor dyspnoea. He complained of much general uneasiness, restlessness and a total loss of appetite. His skin was hot and dry; pulse 110, and rather full and strong; his urine high coloured and very small in quantity.

He gave the following history of the origin and progress of the disease.

About two months before, he had a chancre on the glans penis, and a bubo in the left groin, for which he rubbed *3iss* of the Ungm: Hyd:. His mouth at length became much affected; and continued sore for eight or nine days. He then took about 40 pills in the space of a month. From the description he gave of them, it seemed probable, that some were the Pill: Hyd: and others the

Pill: Cal:. About a week before his admission, he felt an almost intolerable sense of prickling heat and itching on different parts of the surface of his body. This was immediately succeeded by the appearance of a light rose coloured eruption, which particularly affected his hands and feet; and which, gradually assuming a darker tint, diffused itself, as before described, along the legs, thighs and arms. The eruption was not preceded by sickness of any kind, but was itself the first symptom of the disease. Nausea, headache and the other febrile affections, which usually accompany the eruption, soon, however, made their appearance. He continued to take the pills till the day of his admission.

Capiat Ol. Ric. semiunc. statim;
postea sumat mist. Diaph: cum Opio;
et habeat Gargar. deterg.

On

On the 12th, although he found himself rather easier, and rested better the preceding night, his pulse was 115, and still full and strong. The oil produced seven tolerably free motions: yet the skin still continued hot and dry; and there was no change in the colour or quantity of the urine.

He was ordered to continue to take the Mist: Diaph:.

On the 13th, he felt inclined to sleep, but the soreness of his eyes deprived him of rest. The eruption, at the same time, seemed more diffused; and desquamation now first commenced on the hands.

Contr. med. et ingr. Bal: tep:.

I waited till the Bath hour, to ascertain particularly the effects of warm
bathing

bathing in this case; and found that, besides a sort of pleasurable relief, which the patient declared he experienced from its use, the pulse was much softer, and the surface considerably cooler after the immersion.

From this day the warm bath was continued, and with the most beneficial effects.

On the 14th, the urine began to deposit a slimy sediment; and on the 15th, appeared of a lighter colour, and was evacuated in considerable quantities. The skin also became cooler, and the pulse soon regained its natural frequency and strength. The eruption diffused itself over the breast and back; and disappeared from those parts with little desquamation. But from the legs, thighs and arms, the cuticle separated in large
and

and dry scales; and left the surface underneath of a bright red, which colour it retained for a considerable length of time after.

On the 22nd, the eruption appeared a second time on the breast and arms, though mercury had not been administered. It is necessary, however, to remark, that it was attended with but slight pyrexia; and that the ptyalism, mercurial fetor and soreness of the mouth, continued after the fever was entirely removed.

During the entire course of the disease, the irritable state of the eyes precluded all examination of the affection of those organs. When that was abated, it was discovered, that the Conjunctiva, that lines the eyelids, was considerably thickened and diseased, the Adnata was
inflamed

inflamed, and the Cornea of the right eye was affected with compleat Albugo. The principal remedies resorted to for the relief of the Ophthalmia were, scarifications of the Conjunctiva, repeated blisters to the temples, crown of the head and behind the ear, and gently astrigent Collyria.

On the 3rd November, he began to take the following pills (one every night) which were continued till he took 50, when the bubo, which had remained open till this time, (though the chancre disappeared during the course of the fever) at length got well.

Rj. Merc: calc: gr: V

Extr: Cicut: gr: XV

Extr: aq: Opii gr: X

Cons: ros: q. f.

Simul tere et divide in pillulas decim.

His

His eyes, however, still continued sore. The inflammation and pain of the left baffled all topical applications; and the right was so diseased, that there was no hope of being able to restore its sight.

On the 27th January, upon the supposition that the affection of the left eye might be Venereal, he was ordered to rub 3ss of Ung: Hyd: every night. He rubbed fourteen times, when his mouth became sore, and his eyes appeared considerably better.

It is necessary, however, to observe, that scarifications of the conjunctiva were repeatedly employed, at the same time; and he occasionally dropt some of the Vinous Tincture of Opium into his eyes at night.

March 3rd, mouth still affected, left eye much better. On the 1st, the conjunctiva, which lines the eyelid, had been deeply scarified. He still remains in the hospital.

C A S E VI.

ELEANOR GRANT, aged 16, of a weak habit of body, was admitted on the 11th May, 1803, for chancre on the Vagina. She rubbed one drachm of the Ung: Hyd: cum Caph: for seven nights successively, which produced considerable Ptyalism; and on the 18th, the eruption appeared on the outside of her arms, thighs and legs, attended with general uneasiness, head-ache, nausea, hot skin and costiveness. She was purged with the Pulv: Jalap: comp:, and took the mist: diaph:.

The feverish symptoms abated considerably the next day, and the eruption disappeared

disappeared the day following, without any desquamation.

On the 7th of July, she recommenced the use of Mercury. She had used but three drachms of the Ung:, when the eruption appeared upon the breast.

The mercury was discontinued, and the eruption disappeared, without desquamation.

It is necessary to observe, that her venereal complaint got well on the appearance of the eruption; and that she afterwards took 40 of the Pil: Hyd:, without the skin's shewing any tendency to more than a slight efflorescence.

C A S E VII.

JOHN DOYLE, aged 27, of rather a strong habit, was admitted on the 1st of June, 1803, for Venereal sore throat of

two months standing. He rubbed a drachm of the Ung. Hyd: cum Camph: for twelve nights successively, when his mouth became slightly affected, and his entire body was suddenly covered with a light rose coloured eruption, slightly elevated above the surface of the skin. Upon a very minute examination, this elevation was found to be produced by innumerable small transparent vesicles. The eruption was immediately preceded by a sensation of prickling and itching of the skin; and, for a day or two before, he had felt languid and restless. The latter symptoms subsided on the appearance of the eruption.

The mercury was omitted; he was purged with pulv: jalap: comp.; and got a warm bath. The bath was repeated every second day; and he was ordered the diaph: mixture. Desquamation
of

of the dry kind commenced on the 6th day.

Through mistake he rubbed Zi on the 20th; and, on the 21st, the eruption reappeared, ushered in, as before, with a smarting itchiness. The colour was much more vivid than before, and the vesicles were more perceptible; but there was no symptom of Pyrexia whatever.

A similar plan of treatment was adopted, and the disease terminated, as before, in a scurfy desquamation.

In this second attack the desquamation was not completed for three weeks.

On the 5th of August, he was ordered to take a grain of Calomel every night. On the 12th the same quantity was repeated night and morning. His mouth became affected about the 30th. The
mercury

mercury was persevered in, with occasional intermissions, till the middle of September, when he was discharged cured.

The mercurial eruption never appeared, in the slightest degree, during the use of the Calomel.

C A S E VIII.

WILLIAM PILLSWORTH, aged 25, and of rather a full habit, was admitted on the 8th October, 1803, affected with the mercurial eruption, which extended over the Abdomen and inside of the thighs; and the cuticle was proceeding to desquamate from the scrotum and penis.

He had chanceroous excoriations of the glans penis, for which, as an extern of the Lock Hospital, he took 40 of the Pil.

Hyd.;

Hyd:; and rubbed 6 drachms of the
Ung: Hyd: cum Camph:.

On the 4th October, he first perceived the eruption on the scrotum and penis; and which soon extended over the belly and thighs. It was preceded by heat and itching; and accompanied with nausea and headache, which were removed by a saline purge. On the day before his admission, his mouth and throat became sore, and the cuticle of the lips began to desquamate.

He got a saline purge, and an anodyne at night.

The desquamation soon took place on those parts affected by the eruption; and on the 16th he was dismissed at his own request.

His Venereal complaints disappeared whilst he remained in the Hospital.

CASE

C A S E IX.

LAURENCE KEEGAN, aged 18, and of a strong habit, took 14 of the Pil: Hyd: for a bubo in the left groin, as an extern patient of the Lock Hospital. On the 25th January, 1804, he became an intern patient, and rubbed three drachms of the Ung: Hyd:, when the mercurial eruption appeared on the arms and breast.

Mercury was discontinued for two nights, and the eruption disappeared, without desquamation. He then rubbed again; and used but 3i, when the eruption reappeared upon the breast and arms, and then rapidly extended over the entire surface of the body. It was accompanied with restlessness, vomiting, head-ache, thirst, cough and hot skin.

He

He was ordered to take the Ant: Tart:, in nauseating doses, which considerably abated the feverish symptoms; but the vomiting still continued.

On the 4th day after the second appearance of the eruption, desquamation commenced, and Tarfi became sore. The desquamation proceeded but slowly; and was not compleated on the 17th of February, when he was dismissed the Hospital, as his general health seemed much impaired; and the irritability of his stomach, which commenced with the disease, remained undiminished.

His venereal complaints had almost entirely disappeared before he left the Hospital.

THE Mercurial Disease is originally produced as well by the internal, as the external use of Mercury: but, by which mode it is more liable to be caused, is not easily to be determined. For my own part, I am inclined to think that external application is the more likely to induce it: because, wherever the disease has once occurred, and where it still continues necessary to exhibit mercury, that mode of administration has more frequently excited a return of the complaint*. There are some constitutions, however,

* Though, it has been observed, that the mercurial disease, especially, when accompanied by fever, tends to remove, or at least to mitigate, the venereal complaint; yet, it has been frequently found, that the latter continues to lurk in the system even after the former has been entirely removed. I chiefly make the observation in the text to shew, in what manner mercury may be administered with the greatest safety, where the continuance of the disease, for which it may at first have been exhibited, demands its further application.

however, which will not bear the exhibition of mercury, in any form, without manifesting a tendency to that efflorescence of the skin, peculiar to this disease; and, in such, we may observe, that the suffusions retire on the forbearance, and recur on the use of mercury. For the further illustration of this subject, I shall here insert a letter from my friend Mr Philip Crampton, in answer to some queries, which I proposed to him respecting the nature of this disease. And the remarks it contains are the more valuable, as, from the opportunities for observation, which his situation, as Surgeon to the Lock Hospital, has particularly afforded him, he has been enabled to form his opinions with accuracy and precision.

Dawson-

Dawson-Street, Stephen's-Green,

August 12th, 1803.

“ My dear Sir,

I lose no time in answering your Queries in the order, in which you have proposed them to me.

An attention to the following circumstances, will, I believe, render the diagnosis between the Mercurial Eruption, and that attendant on Measles, sufficiently clear; without entering minutely into the history of either.

1st, With respect to the place of the eruptions.

The mercurial eruption is, in general, first perceived upon the inside of the thighs, in the neighbourhood of the scrotum, upon the calves of the legs, upon the outside of the arms and hands, and from thence it gradually extends
itself

itself over the entire surface of the body; with the exception, perhaps, of the face. This, it is well known, is not the progress of the morbillary eruption.

2ndly, With respect to the colour of the eruptions.

I am aware of the difficulty of conveying in words, any definite ideas of colour; but, were I, as a painter, to make copies from nature of the mercurial and morbillary eruptions, I should use more Vermillion, and less Lake, in imitating the tint of the former, than of the latter*. Upon this head, however

* This opinion respecting the colour of the eruption does not seem to coincide with that which I have advanced in another part of this work. (see Page 4th) I have there stated that when the mercurial

ever, it is to be observed, that the colour of the mercurial eruption, even within the first three days, varies, according to the malignity of the disease, from a light, and scarcely perceptible rose colour, to a deep, clear and brilliant red.

Doctor Cullen, mentions the sudden disappearance of colour, when pressure is applied, and its immediate return, when the pressure is removed, as peculiarly characteristic of Erythema*. But the mercurial eruption eminently possesses this quality, and thus we are enabled

rial disease is fully formed, the eruption is of a dusky red colour. But it is to be observed that as Mr. C. is contrasting the tint of two eruptions, he can, therefore, only speak of the colour of one, as relative to that of the other.

G. A.

* Vide Dr. Cullen's Definition of Erythema, first lines, Vol. I. P. 143.

abled to distinguish it from all the Exanthemata; and, in some degree, authorized to class it with Erythema.

For my own part, I am inclined to think, that the mercurial eruption is, in the first instance, an Erythematous affection of the skin, the consequence of the irritation of mercury upon a peculiar constitution: and that the fever, which precedes the eruption, if observable at all, is similar to the slight degree of Pyrexia, which announces the appearance of Erysipelas, Urticaria and Miliarea. Many strong analogies seem to support this doctrine. Such are the cutaneous eruptions, which, in some constitutions, so suddenly succeed to the administration of many animal and vegetable poisons. Dr. Gregory, the present celebrated Professor of the Practice of Medicine in Edinburgh, has frequently

frequently observed this effect of several of the vegetable bitters (particularly, bitter Almonds) on his own person. Shortly after having eat of them, he feels a tingling sensation in his skin, which is immediately succeeded by a redness and a copious miliary eruption over the entire surface of his body; at the same time, he suffers severely from Vertigo, nausea, pain and oppression about the præcordia, all which subside, in the course of the day. I do not recollect, whether, in Dr. Gregory's case, the eruption was succeeded by a desquamation of the cuticle; but, I am rather inclined to think it was; because, in the case of a young Lady, whom I had an opportunity of observing, under nearly similar circumstances, a scurfy desquamation uniformly succeeded to the eruption. In both cases, however, although the surface of the skin, affected with
the

the eruption, was of a reddish hue, the elevation of the cuticle appeared, upon a close examination, to be produced by an infinite number of small watery vesicles, similar to what have been termed Miliaria. The case of Doyle, (Case 7th,) to which I lately directed your attention, in the Lock Hospital, seems to complete the analogy; the vesicular appearance being so distinct, as to attract the notice of the patient himself. In this (which was one of the mildest cases of the disease I had ever met with) though the eruption was very generally diffused over the surface of the body, the desquamation was quite superficial, consisting merely of the squamæ of the cuticle, which had been detached by the water of the Vesicle.

But, to return from conjectures upon the causes of the disease (to which your Queries have imperceptibly led me,) to

M

the

the more useful consideration of its phænomena, it may be observed, that the primary fever, properly so called, is that, which accompanies the eruption, and which, though frequently severe, is never dangerous. The secondary fever, which only appears when the disease runs on to purulent desquamation, is the consequence of the absorption of matter, from a large and exposed surface; and is dangerous, in proportion to the extent of that surface, and the depth of the desquamation.

But little can be said with precision, either as to the commencement, or duration of the desquamatory stage. It may, however, be observed, in general, that, in the mildest forms of the disease, the desquamation begins early, and proceeds slowly*.

I should

* In some cases, there is an efflorescence of the skin in different parts, rather than eruption. If the use of mercury is discontinued, the disease disappears without desquamation.

I should hesitate to send you these rude and undigested observations, were it not that upon a subject of so much importance, and upon which nothing has hitherto appeared to attract general attention, even insulated facts should be collected with diligence, and examined with care.

I remain dear sir,

your very obliged

and humble servt.

PHILIP CRAMPTON,

To

GEORGE ALLEY, Esq.

P.S. Since I wrote the above, upon looking over my notes of Dr. Gregory's Lectures upon the subject of Erysipelas, I find the following remarkable observation: "Mercury sometimes produces an universal Erysipelas, and constitutes a most dangerous disease."

As to the constitutions most likely to be affected by the Mercurial Disease, experience has, as yet, afforded little satisfaction. The plethoric and the debilitated seem alike subject to its influence; and the strong peasant, who had previously enjoyed the choicest blessings of health, and the abandoned female, with a system exhausted by the excesses of debauchery, equally become the victims of its ravages; with this difference, however, that, in the previously debilitated constitution, the fever appears to be of a less inflammatory nature, and more speedily assumes the putrid type.

Whether males or females are more subject to the disease, has been a matter of some controversy. Some have supposed that women are more liable to its attacks, having by no means such a free discharge from the cutaneous vessels.

sels. But experience rather refutes, than confirms this opinion; and I should calculate 5 males for 3 females, to have been affected by it, in the Lock Hospital of Dublin.

The Mercurial Disease does not appear to be more prevalent at any one season of the year. It has been observed, however, to rage with aggravated virulence, at those periods, when any Epidemic disorder prevailed*.

Though a number of children have been, from time to time, admitted into the Lock Hospital, I have never seen one affected with the mercurial disease; and, from every enquiry I have made on the subject, the complaint seems confined to adults.

We

* The same observation experience has confirmed as to the Venereal Disease.

We may observe by Case V. that a return of the disease has occurred, even without a second exhibition of mercury. It is, however, a very unfrequent circumstance; and, to account for it, we must suppose, that the same cause, which produced it in the first instance, remained to excite it in the second. Indeed, in the case above alluded to, the continued ptyalism and soreness of the mouth and fauces, demonstrate fully, that the system still remained under the influence of mercury; and, it is easy to conceive, that, the immediate cause continuing, another, and a similar remote cause might have occurred, to induce the disease, in the second instance.

I cannot conclude these observations without remarking on the utility of the
Institution,

Institution*, to which I have so often alluded in the course of this Essay. We cannot perhaps discover in the whole catalogue of disorders, one, that demands, more especially, the eye of observation, than the Venereal Disease. Most other complaints either terminate spontaneously, or affect individuals only; but in this disease, neglect not only infuses calamity to the victims themselves, but frequently endangers the dearest happiness of society. And the necessity of observation is still further enforced by the reflection, that, in numberless instances, we have to combat not with that disorder merely, but also, with other deplorable mischiefs, which the ignorance of Empyrics may induce
and

* The Westmoreland Lock Hospital, which is capable of holding 260 Patients, and is entirely supported by Government. It need scarcely be added, that the Wards are seldom unoccupied.

and among which, the disease, I have attempted to describe, holds no contemptible situation.

When these circumstances are considered, few will refuse to acknowledge the excellence of the Institution, which, by affording indiscriminate relief, provides against a never failing source of discontent, and rescues many thousands from the gripe of Ignorance and Extortion.

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